

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2501

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 6179

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ASEAN

SUBJECT: ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING

REF: A. BANGKOK 6085; B. BANGKOK 5939.

SUMMARY: FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH MFA AND EMBASSIES INVOLVED IT APPEARS THAT ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING WENT SMOOTHLY AND WAS GENERALLY CONSIDERED SUCCESSFUL. POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS OVERSHADOWED OTHER AGENDA ITEMS. NEUTRALIZATION CONCEPT RECEDED FURTHER INTO BACKGROUND, DELEGATES INDICATING CONSIDERABLY GREATER INTEREST IN MATTERS OF MORE IMMEDIATE CONCERN. END SUMMARY.

1. MFA OFFICIALS APPEAR HAPPY WITH THE WAY ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING WENT, HAVING EXPRESSED TO US FEELING THAT IT WAS GREAT SUCCESS. ONLY
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NEGATIVE ASPECT ACCORDING TO MFA OFFICIAL WAS NONPARTICIPATION OF GVN AS OBSERVER. IT IS NOT CLEAR FROM OUR DISCUSSIONS HERE WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED, BUT DURING FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE MEETING THAI BELIEVED THAT MINISTER OF STATE PHAN QUANG DAN, WHO HAD JUST ARRIVED FROM SAIGON, WOULD BE THE GVN OBSERVER. THIS TURNED OUT NOT TO BE THE CASE (THE THAIS SUSPECT CONFLICTING VIEWS OR AT LEAST INDECISION IN SAIGON) CAUSING EMBARRASSING LAST MINUTE REMOVAL OF VIETNAMESE FLAGS AND DELETION REFERENCE TO GVN IN PM THANOM'S OPENING STATEMENT.

2. GEN. KRIANGSAK, DPTY C/S SUPREME COMMAND, BRIEFED DELEGATES ON CURRENT SITUATION IN CAMBODIA. THAI ATTEMPTED TO PUSH THE IDEA OF ASEAN " COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY" IN POLITICAL SENSE WITH RESPECT TO INDOCHINA, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO CURRENT SITUATION IN CAMBODIA. THE MALAYSIANS AND FILIPINOS HELD BACK FROM THIS CONCEPT, THE MALAYSIANS IN PARTICULAR SHOWING HESITATION TO DO ANYTHING WHICH WOULD CAUSE A HOSTILE REACTION FROM HANOI. HOWEVER, THAI OFFICIAL TOLD US THEY INTEND TO CONTINUE TO PRESS THE IDEA. THAIS DESCRIBE THEIR STRATEGY AS INTENDED (A) TO ADD POLITICAL PRESSURE ON THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TO REMOVE THEIR FORCES FROM CAMBODIA AND LAOS, AND (B) TO LEAD FINALLY TO DRV ACCEPTANCE OF A TEN- NATION CONFERENCE WHICH WOULD IMPLY RECOGNITION OF THE POLITICAL STATUS QUO IN INDO CHINA. THIS THAI EFFORT DID RESULT IN AN ITEM IN A JOINT PRESS STATEMENT WHICH EXPRESSED THE MINISTERS' CONCERN OVER THE GRAVE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA AND LAOS, AND THEIR VIEW THAT " STILL GREATER EFFORTS ON THE PART OF ASEAN MEMBERS MUST BE EXERTED WITH A VIEW TO ENHANCING THE PROSPECTS OF LASTING PEACE IN INDOCHINA." FURTHER, THE MINISTERS " REAFFIRMED THE DESIRABILITY OF CONVENING A CONFERENCE OF ALL SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME." ACCORDING TO A MEMBER OF THE SINGAPORE DELEGATION, IT WAS GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THERE WAS NO INTENT TO GO AHEAD WITH SUCH A CONFERENCE UNTIL HANOI WAS PREPARED TO ATTEND. THIS WOULD APPEAR ALSO TO BE IN LINE WITH THE THAI STRATEGY OUTLINE ABOVE.

3. THE VARIOUS DELEGATIONS GAVE A RUNDOWN ON THE STATUS OF THEIR POLICY REGARDING RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. THE FILIPINOS SAID IN THE PRIVATE MEETING THAT THEY ARE CURRENTLY CONSIDERING RECOGNITION OF PEKING. (ROMULO HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS SAYING THAT THEY MIGHT SIMULTANEOUSLY RECOGNIZE THE PRC AND USSR). THE MALAYSIANS ALSO APPEARED TO THE THAIS TO BE " OUT IN FRONT" ON THE CHINA QUESTION. THAILAND AND INDONESIA SAID THAT FOR THEM RESORATION OF FULL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE PRC IS A LONG WAY OFF.

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ACCORDING TO A SINGAPORE DELEGATE, MALIK TOLD OF A CONVERSATION

WITH A CHINESE MINISTER IN PARIS IN WHICH HE EXPLAINED FRANKLY INDONESIA'S DIFFICULTIES IN RESUMING RELATIONS WITH PEKING; ANTI-GOI INDONESIAN EXILES IN PEKING, CHINESE SUPPORT OF INSURGENTS IN KALIMANTAN, AND FOUR MILLION OVERSEAS CHINESE IN INDONESIA. THE THAI POSITION ON DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE PRC WAS BY THEIR OWN ACCOUNT CLOSE TO THAT OF THE INDONESIANS. (BANGKOK 5810) THAIS DESCRIBED SINGAPORE AS THE MOST CONSERVATIVE OF ALL ON RELATIONS WITH CHINA, STRESSING PROBLEM THEY WOULD HAVE COPING WITH ANTICIPATED SUBVERSION AMONG THEIR POPULATION. THE THAI, ACCORDING TO MFA OFFICIAL, HAD HOPED THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO DEVELOP MORE OF A CONSENSUS ON MOVING IN CONCERT OR GENUINE CONSULTATION ON MOVES TOWARD RELATIONS WITH CHINA, BUT THE PHILIPPINE AND MALAYSIAN POSITIONS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE MOST THAI COULD HOPE FOR AT THIS POINT WAS AGREEMENT ON EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION.

4. MALAYSIA PRESENTED A PAPER ON THE THREAT POSED BY EXPANSION OF JAPANESE PRODUCTION OF SYNTHETIC RUBBER. IT WAS AGREED BY THE MEETING THAT THIS SHOULD BE MENTIONED IN THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE (REF A). MFA OFFICIAL SAID THAT THERE WAS A GENERAL ATTITUDE OF CONCERN AMONG THE DELEGATES ON THE DANGERS OF JAPANESE ECONOMIC DOMINATION ALBEIT COUPLED WITH RECOGNITION OF THE VITAL ECONOMIC ROLE WHICH JAPAN MUST CONTINUE TO PLAY.

5. THE NEUTRALIZATION CONCEPT PLAYED A VERY SMALL ROLE IN THE CONFERENCE-- JUST ENOUGH, ACCORDING TO THAI OFFICIAL, TO SATISFY MALAYSIA. SUBJECT WAS NOT MENTIONED IN COMMUNIQUE BUT DID APPEAR IN BRIEF PARAGRAPH IN JOINT PRESS STATEMENT. A MEMBER OF THE MALAYSIAN DELEGATION COMMENTED, ACCORDING TO MEMBER OF ANOTHER DELEGATION, THAT " THE PARAGRAPHS ON NEUTRALIZATION KEEP GETTING SHORTER AND SHORTER."

6. ACCORDING TO THAI DELEGATE, MALIK GAVE " FULL AND INTERESTING" RUNDOWN ON THE INDONESIAN EXPERIENCE IN THE ICCS. THE TONE WAS DESCRIBED AS ONE OF DISILLUSIONMENT, ALTHOUGH MALIK SAID THEY WOULD NOT PULL OUT BUT WOULD SEE THE TASK THROUGH.

7. THE MEETING ESTABLISHED A COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION OF INDOCHINA STATES, WHICH WILL MEET IN KUALA LUMPUR. ACCORDING TO MALAYSIAN DELEGATE, IT WILL SIMPLY ACT AS A CLEARING HOUSE FOR OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE.

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8. THE JOINT PRESS STATEMENT NOTED THAT " MEMBERS OF ASEAN HAD EMERGED AS A DYNAMIC GROUP OF LIKE- MINDED COUNTRIES IN INTERNATIONAL GATHERINGS AND FORUMS", AND THE " THE MINISTERS WERE OF THE VIEW THAT ... THE PRACTICE OF PRESENTING A COMMON ASEAN STAND SHOULD BE FURTHER ENCOURAGED PARTICULARLY IN DEALING WITH THE MORE DEVELOPED

COUNTRIES IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CONFERENCES WHERE ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL CO- OPERATION ARE DISCUSSED." MFA OFFICIAL SAID AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT THIS WOULD MEAN IN PRACTICE WAS PLANNED MEETING OF ASEAN MINISTERS BEFORE NEXT MINISTERS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SESSION.

9. THE FILIPINOS MADE A PRESENTATION ON THE SITUATION OF THE MUSLIMS IN THE SOUTHER PHILIPPINES. IT WENT SMOOTHLY WITHOUT ANY ACCUSATION OR REQUEST FOR ASEAN TO TAKE A POSITION. FILIPINOS SEEMED GENUINRLY PLEASED AT THE ASSISTANCE THEY HAD RECEIVED FROM MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA AT THE BENGHAZI MUSLIM CONFERENCE.

10. THE FILIPINOS SUBMITTED A PAPER ON THE ARCHIPELAGO THEORY OF SOVEREIGNTY. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF THE PAPER AND IT WAS ACCEPTED FOR TECHNICAL STUDY.

11. ECAFE SEC GEN DESIGNATE MARIMAS ATTENDED THE MEETING AS AN ADVISOR TO THE INDONESIAN DELEGATION. MALIK EXPLAINED, ACCORDING TO PHILIPPINE DELEGATE, THAT HE HAD BROUGHT MARIMAS IN TO GIVE HIM AN EXPOSURE TO THE ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS OF ASEAN.

12. RAJARATNAM RAISED THE QUESTION OF THE USE OF DIPLOMATIC POUCHES BY COMMUNIST COUNTRIES FOR THE SHIPMENT OF SUBVERSIVE PROPAGANDA. THIS WAS REPORTED RATHER PROMINENTLY IN THE BANGKOK PRESS WITH THE CULPRIT IDENTIFIED AS THE USSR. HOWEVER, THAI DELEGATE SAID THAT THERE WAS NO MENTION OF USSR AT ANY TIME DURING THE SESSION.

13. THE MEETING AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO SETTING UP AN ASEAN SECRETARIAT AND INDONESIA OFFERED JAKARTA AS A PERMANENT SITE. A COMMITTEE WILL MEET IN MANILA TO FORMULATE RECOMMENDATIONS.
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